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CEREBUS MELMOTH

Z E R O



NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

Hmmm.

Seem to be running into some turbulence, sir. Today is August 28 and I'm just finishing up *two* days of answering the mail. Now part of the problem is that we had a week off at the beginning of the month (well, Ger and Monique did — I sort of hung around taking phone orders and buying furniture for the second floor Office of the Vice-President, nothing more depressing than a vacation for someone who *really* enjoys his job) so there was a six week accumulation and *Jaka's Story* ended so there were a batch of letters about that. Not an avalanche mind you, but frequent squalls and scattered flurries. I told Monique last time that I was going to try to answer the letters more often and now here she is with eight pounds of letters and yellow note pad answers on her desk. Sorry. Sorry. *Quite* sorry.

So here we are starting *Melmoth*, the shortest of the Cerebus volumes at a puny two hundred and forty pages (aww. Isn't it cute? It's dust a 'iddle one!). Which is why it's designated as *Melmoth a short story* in the black box that never leaves the side of the Note from the President over yonder. This is *sure* to piss off all the *artistes* in the biz with (in Howard Chaykin's immortal phrase) the backs of their hands nailed to their foreheads, but hey around here two hundred and forty pages is a cake-walk, not a *magnum opus*.

This one I like a lot because it serves the dual function of distant epilogue to *Jaka's Story* — a kind of echo you can scarcely hear — and prologue to *Mothers & Daughters* (which clocks in at a hefty one thousand pages and could probably last a few rounds in the ring against *Church & State*). It also ends at the half-way point of the Cerebus story-line which is the finish of the Male Cycle in the story-line which switches gender (in a thematic sense) in 151. Um. What else? It's . . . pardon?

Is *who* in it?

Cerebus?

Jeez that's a good one. Let me check my notes here. Mm. Nothing in 139. Nothing in 140. Dum da da da dum . . .

Ah.

Yep, Cerebus *definitely* appears in this one. We just hope he doesn't hurt sales too badly.

There's a whole bunch of interesting people I can't wait to get to (including normalroach in this issue. Valentino — excuse me *JIM* Valentino called when he saw the sketch in CBG to say he was looking forward to seeing this one. Normalman might even be optioned by Touchhole Films — excuse me TouchStone Films by the time this comes out which could possibly make us targets of a Disney's Magic Castle Lawsuit. Well, blow me, Michael Eisner) Dino, Janice, (that's Janice in this issue. Hi, Janice) Sebastian Melmoth, Robbie Ross, Reggie Turner and uh . . . what's his name. I just said it a minute ago.

Cerebus!

That's right.

Dig in folks and I'll see you next time.

Having attended the *San Diego Comic Convention* in 1981 (solo) and having attended (with Gerhard) in 1986, it's almost time for our once-every-five-years visit. That's right! Gerhard and I *will* attend the 1991 San Diego Con next August. We haven't worked out any details but right now we're kind of partial to just bringing a couple of lawn chairs and sitting out front of the convention site, so as to avoid the Cigarette Gestapo (Ger still smokes) that made 1986 such an adventure in fascist living. If the Marvel and DC parties are as lame as usual, it'll probably be time for another 'Aardvarks Over San Diego' or 'Riot at the Hyatt' or maybe 'Armageddon III' with Dan and Gino.

Remember! Only two more appearances before issue 300 (1996 and 2001).

CEREBUS

NO. 139 OCTOBER 1990

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Jnx_Scanz_HaCsA !!!

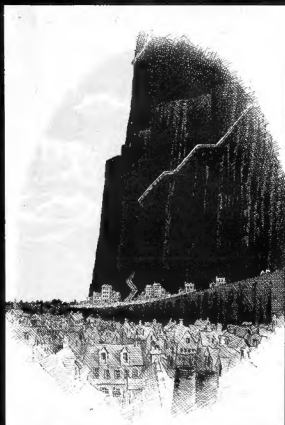
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a short story

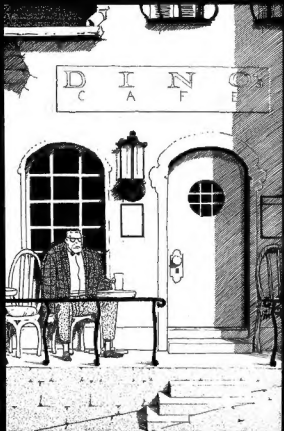
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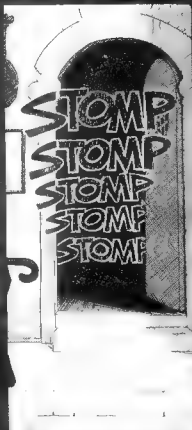


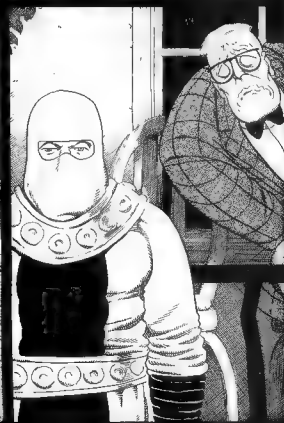
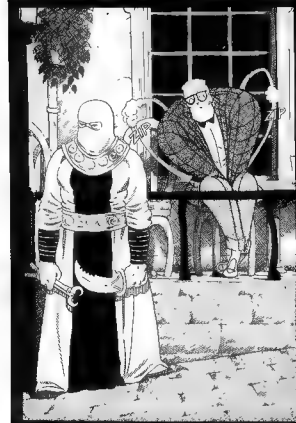


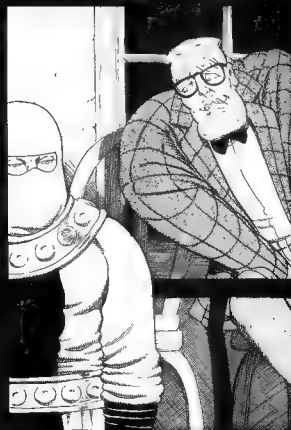
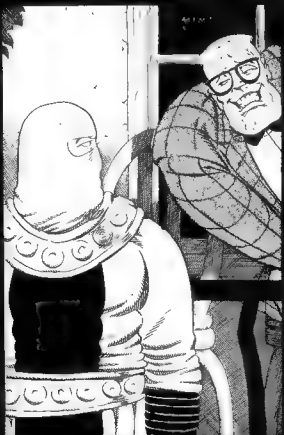
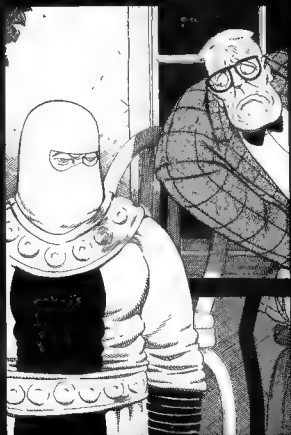














AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dearest Dave -

I so wanted to type this, but my borrowed typewriter's cord fits in NONE of the outlets here in my ancient apartment. P'rhaps if typed, you'd print this one. I was so looking forward to the last, ever-witty missive seeing print. but, alas, I wondered, "were it too full o' expletives?" No, I saw some "shits" & "fucks" in the column under question. Maybe too little embarrassing, irrelevant self-disclosure? I think maybe. Too much fawning hyperbole? It's never uncalled for, but can get redundant, I'll agree. Ne'er mind! I got a form letter touched by Dave's actual hand and so shall die happy.

(I'm not even going to touch on the what-are-we-all-doing-on-this-page-and-why-are-we-so-infrequently-funny issue. Well, okay, but I'll only say this: "People yakety-yak and talk and waste their time away, but Mr. Ed will never talk unless he has something to say." Yeah, well, some of us got it and some don't. We're of a type, all of us here, but many variations on a theme. Those of us unpossessed of that rare talent of constant and unerring genius can only say "what it is" but communicate we gotta. (though punctuate we sometimes cannot). Yes, sometimes it is "group therapy" (primal scream?), but a unique and necessary outlet also. And to Eric Hamlin, in case you're interested, I'm now listening to the The Lomious Monk Quartet, and have no love life to speak of, you're welcome very much)

What'm gettin' at, Dave, is this. I've had many unwritten letters in me these past months. After #131, I would've told how I bought Coltranes "Om" that afternoon, and they proved an incongruity. "Om" requires immersion in the chaotic stew of music, urges one to howl and flail, Chapter One of "Mystery Achievement" (the aptest and evocativest title yet) asks for darkness, silence, a draft in the room if possible. Wanted also to respond to David Chenette in 132 (which I've done above). Of course, #134 demanded some comment on "Maggie" #135 had everything - when one finally realizes what has happened to Jaka in the

narrative and what it meant (I *knew* she could only run away). In present tense, what the hell would happen next, where's the Great, Inevitable Sim Deception, what could make this seemingly settled climax erupt into fine and proper devastation? Also, I would ask "Penny" at Cornell "start seriously acquainting yourself with female anatomy", are you kidding? That's how we got all frothed up in the first place!

And now, I find myself in the same place with scores and hundreds and tens of thousands of others out there. Trying to conjure up the right words, the correct expression of gratitude and admiration. Two years we've been with you on this, hoping it would pay off, wondering how, trusting you. So we send a "Dear Diary" to your door. "Here's where I am, this is what I'm doing, Guns 'n' Roses rule", that's the easy part, but the appreciation - when not altogether avoided - emerges only as imprecise plaudits and flattery-by-superlatives. Could we heed the Prince of Danes and exercise "the soul of wit"? After going through so much, and receiving what we do not yet understand, (but feel deeply intensely, yes) it hardly seems enough.

The Lovely Laura Poehman and I talked today, about this powerful climax. She said either you have remarkable powers of empathy or, who knows, had a similar experience. "True", assented I, "such real, honest, human, emotional intensity have I seldom seen in sequential art" (Good place to mention that your Eisner influence has never been more apparent.) I was reminded of a blurb on the *Less Than Zero* jacket, which said as much (I paraphrase) "Mr. Ellis is a young man who's seen and heard a lot, or else has a great imagination" Well, with his second novel, we saw what side was up, didn't we. Dave, maybe someone will ask the same of you one day, after writing a scholarly tome on your interpreted laundry lists, but now, it's not a question. Go on, take your bow

For me, all I can tell you is that I really want to run up to Jaka and give her a big hug and a reassuring smile amidst

the silence and probably another hug.

Just thought of something. This week marks five years for me of reading Cerebus on a don't delay, order-today basis. Yup.

And what else to say? Looking forward to more excellence. Boffo yuks with Lord Julius? How-dee-doo!

Love, love me do.

Al McCarty
P.O. Box 2720
Mpls, MN
USA 55402

P.S. Can I, if you're printing this, which, I may add, would be nice, but I'm shutting up now, say "Bonjour" to Gilles Coin? Thanks! And, this is it, I promise Kelly Thang, too?

P.S. Um, Dave . . . no, I promised

Dear Dave,

Well, it's over. *Jaka's Story* is done, now we move on to Julius and Painu. At least, I think we are. You took me by surprise with the ending to Jaka's Story in that Cerebus did not slice and dice his way in and out of the prison to save Jaka. I may be in the minority, but I am totally on Rick's side in his rejection of Jaka. I have no idea why she had the abortion, but the lack of consultation with Rick is unforgivable. The question of how Cerebus will react to this news is contingent on his learning of it. Jaka's not going to tell him. He probably will not see Rick any time soon. Julius might tell him, but he won't know unless Jaka tells him, and she does not look like she wants to talk. What you have planned for our boy is unknown. What should be coming up is something you talked about years ago. You said that because Cerebus is a 300 issue story, it was silly to expect revelations about the ultimate direction of the storyline in the early going. You used *Elfquest* as an example, in that it was not until issue 13 of the series that a broad indication of where things were headed was given. If you are on roughly the same schedule, either this chapter or the next one will give equivalent hints and answers. Maybe

What I really hope happens is that Cerebus is given another chance to control his own life. This will be difficult because the Cinnists want him dead. This is unfair. The fan boy inside of me wants a suitably dramatic confrontation between Cerebus and Cirin. This could be as simple as him revealing to her what the judge told him. He could give her the proper interpretation of Tarim and Terim. That first was Tarim, then was Terim, and together they created the universe. Hopefully Cerebus will have come to his senses and ignored the Judge's slant

on things. I felt that The Judge's explanation was unfair to Tarim, in that it assigned blame to an event that had no evil in it. It is akin to blaming someone for looking at something. Term was talking out of the side of her neck when she "forgave" Tarim. She had not the power to forgive, because there was no evil intent, no hidden motives and therefore no injurious action done to her on purpose to forgive. She assumed Tarim's actions (Looking at her) were hostile and when they interacted, she "forgave" him. This was goofy. I know I will win no points with the anarcho-vegetarian-witch brigade of your readership, but I can live with that. What I can't live without is *Cerebus*, and thanks to you I don't have to.

Best,

John C B. Battin
716 Western Avenue
Albany, NY
USA 12203

Dear Dave,

This letter is being written on funny paper (sorry!) because it's all I have. I'm on vacation in Europe for a month and a half - my graduation present to myself - and these are pages from my journal.

I wanted to respond to Master Bates - sorry, I mean Mister Bates - who commented on my previous power-atheist letter.

I agree with him completely that subjugation of oneself, and one's "personal" faith to an organized religious body is a sad loss of individual identity. It's just like joining a fraternity or sorority and wearing all the clothes they want you to. It's better to be a vague agnostic. And I've never met an agnostic who wasn't vague about "god". There are no proofs or even definitions of "god" which are not full of logical and philosophical holes.

When you (generic "you") were little you believed in Santa Claus. Santa Claus rewards those who are good and punishes those who are bad. When you are old you believe in "god" who does the same thing. Of course, I'm referring to a standard Western god, but, whatever god it is, belief is based on faith which is simply a lie, a belief in something because you want to. And, please, let's not confuse this with faith in *people*. How accurate one's faith in a certain person may be is simply based on how predictable his or her behaviour is and how good one's judgement is. We have no past experience getting to hang out with god, do we?

If you want to make yourself feel better by wishful thinking, then, by all means

have your Santa Claus. Just don't censor my books, don't inflict prayers on me, don't repress me or anyone by your laws. I'm sorry, I guess I *am* directing my anger mostly at organized religions and not "personal" faith. "Personal" faith is not a threat to me and my freedom (I hope), is it? Did you know that birth control is illegal in Ireland?

As to the *Bible*, the Jews existed before the Torah. The Torah is about the Jews. By what devious means could you accept the Torah without accepting Judaism. Perhaps you would say that all current forms are a corruption of the past? Join a dead group? Similarly, the "New Testament" wasn't written until there was already a thriving church. Much of it was based on the oral stories passed on from church to church. If you accept the New Testament, how can you reject organized religion? If all "new" churches are a corruption, then should you not seek to form a church like the one's of old? "And on this rock, I shall build my church" or something like that.

At any rate, I'm not morally opposed to agnostics as I am to organized religions (who naturally seek to increase their power), but I do find the attitude rather childish. Not to be condescending about it (but I am) but after all, I am a power-atheist.

Dave, you have got to visit Gimmelwald, Switzerland. You are too old (nothing personal) to stay at the youth hostel here - which is a blast - but there is a hotel (Hotel Mittaghorn) run by Walter M. who serves a delicious dinner. It is *so* beautiful. No cars are allowed here. It's just cows and goats with bells, farmers and the most beautiful view of the alps you could imagine. And no tourists. Gimmelwald is near (above) Interlocken and should not be confused with Grindelwald. Oh, and there is also beer, or course. Get the small ones. They're not as good as a buy as the big beers, but taste much better. The other best place I was at is the Cinque Terre in the Italian Riviera. Beautiful, quant & not as crowded as places like Nice or Port Affino (spelling?). Hope you are well, and I hope the comic book store is getting all my issues while I'm here. Or I'll be pissed.

Yours in separation of Church & State,
Dave Katzman
address temporarily
5 Eckert Rd
Newington, CT
06111

P.S. I meant Master Bates as a good thing. Long live Onanism!

Dear Dave,

As a new reader who, yes, worships at your feet, I was wondering why the other readers (Hello!) feel the need to tell you what they listen to when reading CEREBUS? Does the fact that I listen to Vinnie Vincent, TNT, and Kim Wilde give you (or them) an insight into my personality?

I think it's just a way for the fans to shamelessly plug their favourite artists.

Yours shamelessly,

BPS
22-15 126th Street
College Point, NY
USA 11356

Dear Dave:

Let me see if I can set the CCRS (Cliched Cerebus Reader Setting) for you: It's about 1:40 a.m. and Gary Moore's "Still Got the Blues" is on in the background (Wait - not hip enough - substitute Burning Tree, Mano Negra, or Under Neath What as per your preference). My roomie just went to sleep while I'm keeping myself occupied by waiting for the laundry to dry. We just finished watching the latest "Howard Stern Summer Show." He may be able to sleep but I'm still having trouble erasing from my mind the shot of the dude who tried to blow smoke through his eyes (yes, eyes) puking on the air. Ugh, did you ever see Bogosian's "Talk Radio"? Real live Chet, this one.

Oh yeah, Cerebus 136/Jaka 23.

After finishing the ish (the cover of which strikes me as reminiscent of the early High Society period, circa the issues numbering in the late 20's-early 30's) I had to check back with 135 to see if I missed anything involving Rick directly - though I guess we could tell in hindsight dear Mrs. Thatcher knew full well what she was doing, hmmm? Throughout the whole saga, Rick has never impressed me. But then, I suppose that's the point - Rick is the consummate "other guy" who has won, er, make that stolen the love of the gal we want. (Examples of which are now appearing on the ol' letters page, of course). When you meet "the other guy", you're often surprised at how ordinary he is - after all, you expected him to be something pretty damn outstanding to have broken up your budding love affair. Thus we all want Fred and not this rube to be with Jaka, and we ask ourselves over and over: Just what is she doing with this fuck? We can all see that he's a nowhere man - why can't she?

The twist you've thrown into this situation Dave is that instead of focusing on Fred and his loss/lack or

involvement/moping state you've taken everything away from Jaka that she has held dear—her love of dancing and expressing herself, the stability of Rick, the Nurse, the Astoria incident from flashback, free will, even Fred to an extent, I guess, who's been in limbo for about a year. You have broken down her core self entirely. She will have to reshape and regroup from the ground up. Is this story all just Dave's revenge? No—it's more than just a symbolic swipe at the women we can't have—it's a genuine story and character advancement. Jaka is an infinitely more "real" character after this novel than she was before.

I have to say I really felt uneasy about the uncertainty of what would happen next once "Mystery Achievement" started. But I like that; though I was enjoying the easy-going pace of the first half and the carefully constructed "drop-in" flashbacks, I wasn't prepared for what eventually went down in Pud's place. "Mystery Achievement" took the whole *Jaka's Story* to a different plane, one which I felt brought Cerebus, the whole Story, to another pinnacle. In short, it reminded me of the mindset I get when I'm absorbed with something by Updike, Roth, Malamud, Cheever, Bellow, et al. I just feel so alive and in tune with what the author is trying to get across; it's invigorating to read such good work. Cerebus definitely belongs in that class.

And what makes it even more special Dave is you get it out month after month. All the other greats in this field—Moore, when he's working, Sienkiewicz, Pekar, Los Bros, Wagner, and a few others—can't seem to put it together on such a consistent and regular basis with one book/subject, not to mention sticking with it for any length of time; they all seem to burn out. Hell, even the Stones are often just going through the (e)motions these days. Yet for whatever reason, you've got it—the fire it takes to stick it out and let it develop. You've delivered before and we've come to trust you to bring us the goods each time—we just know. This is art in progress, man.

You'll have to excuse me while I lapse into yet another CRC (Cerebus Reader Cliche), but I too like many of your readers used to be a comics junkie—you know up to 30 a month and all that. But then I got to the real world, where I don't have the time anymore to waste on the latest *GirlyMan Pumpitude* adventure. Besides, as you get older you find most comics are just comics. Few comics out today are actual art and worth cutting into my valuable leisure time, time that could be spent on writing my next pitch for *Musican* mag. Cerebus, though, gets a look on my time when it comes out.

I've been around since ish 29, so the letter from Adam Beechen in 136 hit a cord with me—a lot of us have grown up with this book and can pinpoint certain events in our lives with what ish of Cerebus happened to be out at the time. I felt that nostalgic wave when I was searching through my collection recently to find the Mick & Keef issues for one of the rock critics at the magazine I work at (it's the Stereo Review family, if you must know—I'm managing editor of *Car Stereo Review*). Needless to say he, a Stones man from way back, loved 'em, and has even contemplated asking you to do something for one of our new magazines called *Sound & Image* (if he calls, you didn't hear nuthin from me).

At any rate, I just recalled that no matter where I've gone these past nine years or so, from state to state, school, college, and finally the Big Apple, Cerebus has been there as a constant. It's an old friend, tried and true, one you check up on once a month and find out how he's doing—getting older, a bit more complex than you remember, wiser, yes, and definitely still kicking. You don't even know where other "friends" you made during this time live, much less what they do and why they exist. They shot their wad and got out.

With that in mind, I'll put my twenty-five cents (inflation, you know) in on why a lot of us start our letters by saying something like (names changed to protect the guilty): "As much as we're right for each other, Donna and I can't put it together. It's not just me specifically, it's just that she doesn't want a relationship with anyone right now. Yet every time I look into those mesmerizing blue eyes, I can feel them cut through me like I've arrived one relationship too late to save her. She's jaded, beyond the point of giving any of it back, of releasing the anger, and taking a chance again." Why do (and Dave, for that matter) let these things run wild in Aardvark Comment? I'll tell you why. It's exactly what you'd tell any other close friend of yours that you confide in and who confides in you. It's only natural. We give back to the source. Jaka's Story, whatever it's real intent (as you know Dave it's like fine wine, you gotta let it breathe a while for it all to soak in), has touched some nerves and inner demons in a lot of the readership who sees a bit of themselves in what's happened. We end up wanting to share the feeling any way we can. Thus the lame yet poetic meanderings about our failed love lives.

By the way, you bet your ass I'm going to order me up a *Jaka's Story* phone book—*High Society* became a true masterpiece to me after I read it in one complete setting; one book, full

concentration. So throughout this rambling mess (hey gumme a break, I gotta write in strict and often highly technical structure every day, so I gotta cut loose and let the grammar fly every now and then). I just wanted to add another (heretofore fairly silent) voice to the many who follow Cerebus every step of the way, eventually right up until 300 (so let's throw a party, all of us who are here when 2004 (my wrap guesstimate) rolls around—I'll bring the Red Stripe). Dave, you done good and we know you'll keep doing so. No matter where we go, how old we get, we're there.

So try to excuse me if I've prattled off the beaten path a bit throughout this one. Then add me to the list of the faithful CRC's till the end.

Here's to meeting Cirin

Yrs,

Mike Mettler
803 27th St. #33
Union City, NJ
USA 07087

Dear Dave 'n' Ger -

For years I saw Cerebus at my various and sundry local comic shops and would occasionally skim through it, think it looked kinda neat, wonder what the hell is going on, and inevitably put it back, concluding that if it's really that great, one of my comic-junkie friends would eventually recommend it. This is how I avoided wading through the Marvel/DC muck-heap to get to the works of Hernandez, Moore, Bagge, etc. *Somebody* I know would say something about it sooner or later.

Right?

Many years passed.

Nobody even mentioned it, let alone gave me a yay or nay. But still I'd see it out of the corner of my eye, and go through the little aforementioned routine. Finally one day I saw a used copy of *Swords of Cerebus #6* and thought "What the hell". (This was during summer vacation when money is a real problem, by the way...) I read it, and to make a long story short, immediately lost all semblance of the common sense I had painstakingly crammed into my head so I could get through the summer without starving. The next few weeks were a ravenous orgasmic blur of tracking down, buying, and reading every Cerebus I could get my hands on. I couldn't think of anything else (with the notable exception of Elizabeth, the rapturously beautiful woman I've been in love with for years who finally returned my affection—kind of a Jaka in a Sophia's body only about Cerebus's height) (I mean, can ya blame me?)

Anyway, I finally caught up yesterday and my Cerebus habit, though certainly not satiated, is at least temporarily pacified. (How I'm going to get used to a mere twenty pages a month I don't know, but I guess it beats waiting sixteen years for the new *Love & Rockets*!)

I can't tell you how inspiring it is to see a work of art so beautiful, fascinating, wide in scope, and completely unwilling to pander to potential audiences with artistic compromise. I get kinda peeved when I read letters from people with the gall to tell you how your book should be done, even more so when these letters have such an effect on you that you're all but apologizing for changing the pace (brilliantly, I might add) in *Jaka's Story*. Fuck that, Dave! Listen to your gut! I can't imagine a stylistic change no matter how drastic, that you *knew* was right that I wouldn't want to see in Cerebus. As a matter of fact, the more drastic the better, I like surprises, and this comic has the potential to be anything.

Well, I just wanted you to know all that, and despite the fact that you're this far into it, there are still people like me who will throw financial reality to the wind and get into what you're doing. (Maybe *not* a lot of people — I still haven't met any other Cerebus freaks — but some people) Cerebus has become one of my top ten reasons for staying alive, and God knows you can't have too many of those.

Thanks! Yours until 300 and beyond,
Joshua Pollock
1814 Fell Street
San Francisco, CA
USA 94117

P.S. A couple of weeks ago I was hypnotized. I don't remember most of it, but at the height of my ultra-relaxed sub-conscious state I saw, of all people, Elrod, big as life, in beautiful black and white. Later that day, I felt much better.

P.P.S. Don't worry — you are *not* to comic books what Neal Peart is to rock lyrics. . . Jeez, what a scary concept.

Surs:

Ummm . . . er . . . Bukowski . . . sex packets . . . funk-metal . . . participating consciousness . . . Traci Lords . . . crime . . . Burroughs . . . Stonehenge . . . Dali . . . rice paper . . . Tesco Vee . . . ecstasy . . . SCTV . . . Neal Cassidy . . . Mandelbrot . . . pouty hippie babes . . . Cronenberg . . . Spacemen 3 . . . Henry Miller . . . "Just Say Moe" . . . entropy . . . Alan Moore . . . Escher . . . ancient astronauts . . . hemp . . . tabloids . . . Syd Barrett . . . Buddy Bradley . . . analogue sound . . . Philip K. Dick . . .

"Born Again Pagan" . . . Cerebus . . . alchemy . . . Forced Exposure . . . "women suck" . . . Terry Gilliam . . . Thirteenth Floor Elevators . . . Harry Dean Stanton . . . New Zealand . . . pouty ghoulie babes . . . Steven Wright . . . spandex . . . Iggy and the Stooges . . . No! Wait! . . . Stooges Bootlegs!! Yeah, yeah . . . "Open up and Bleed", "Wet my bed", "Rubber Legs", "Heavy Liquid"!!

Phew!!! Am I cool enough for your letters page yet?

Here's hopm'

Swerve Severe
Windsor, Ontario

Hi Dave and Gerhard!

Cerebus has been a strong positive factor in my life this past month. I had to return to the U.S. (from the Navy base in Scotland that I'm stationed) due to my mother's terminal illness. While I was there, I was able to find the first 8 issues of *Jaka's Story* that I was missing. I also found your early interview in *Comics Journal* 82-83. This was the main reading I had available during a week spent at the hospital. Since I don't handle hospital atmosphere very well, reading Cerebus helped me immensely. Thank you both for the pleasure Cerebus gave me during a very difficult time in my life.

Since my return, I've received the Cerebus volume and both *Church and State* volumes plus just received a couple days ago Cerebus #133-136 and High Society reprint of Cerebus #33-39. Although I've enjoyed all of it a great deal, *Jaka's Story* has overshadowed everything else for me. I have appreciated the story and art of *Jaka's Story* immensely. It's the favourite of the Cerebus novels for me. My favourite covers are issues 114, 119, 121 and 126. Special thank you to you both for those covers. After reading issue 135, I thought "Is the last issue going to go so easy - with the Cernists just letting Jaka and Rick go free?" I should have known better. Issue 136 really got me - I felt deeply for Jaka, Rick and the dead child. A very well done ending to *Jaka's Story*.

Granting that I've just finished re-reading the entire *Jaka's Story*, I feel it is among my favourites of my reading, not just comics. That includes Will Eisner's *Contract with God*, Isaac Asimov's *Foundation and Robot* series, Tolkien's works, Henry Kuttner's science fiction, Fredric Brown's mystery and science fiction and Rex Stout's *Nero Wolfe* detective series. I don't collect 1st editions but I will be ordering the *Jaka's Story* volume immediately. *Jaka's Story* is definitely

worth making an exception for.

I'm also ordering the *High Society* volume, which will complete my Cerebus collection except for issue 51, which hopefully you will reprint right after High Society. I will continue to buy your single issue reprints because the covers, idea sketches and Single Pages are of enough interest in themselves to justify buying the reprints.

I hope you both get an avalanche of positive feedback from your 25,000 readers - *Jaka's Story* deserves it. I don't feel you get enough credit, Gerhard, for the tremendous quality and quantity of artwork you do on Cerebus. Thank you for your contributions to Cerebus as well as the work you do as Vice President.

"Like-A-Looks" has me very interested. I'm sure it will have a different feel from *Jaka's Story*, although it's going to be difficult to adjust to anything after *Jaka's Story*.

If I feel I have anything worthwhile to say, I'll be writing in another three months when I receive my next shipment of Cerebus.

Peace, Love Long and Prosper,

Jerry Edwards
NSGA P.O. Box 1024
FPO, NY
09518-1100

Hey Dave,

First things first; I am a stereotypical Cerebus fan: I am a male with a university-level education who has recently had a bad experience with a Jaka and has read practically everything you have done in regards to Cerebus (even the stories from *Epic Illustrated* - was that a good or bad experience for you, seeing as how *Epic* is run by Marvel?), and am writing "my very first fan letter". I consider myself to be strange - regardless of the opinions of others - and listen to music which is often rejected by my friends and relatives. Isn't it odd how this type of person seems to be so common among your fans? Some sort of sociological thing, one would expect.

Now that the messy personal details are done, some thoughts on the final installment of *Jaka's Story*. The Cernist/Kevillist conflict comes to a head in this issue. The Cernists, in their mother hood, do not represent a feminist society so much as they represent a sexist society. Ironically, by placing such an emphasis on the sacredness of females the Cernists perform the same function as masculinist societies throughout history have performed: they place women into

idealized roles which imprison them and prevent them from being human beings. So much of an emphasis is placed on motherhood that women are as much the "other" as they are in our own cultures; the truly dominant have no need to place themselves apart - that is why the white, male, heterosexual minority is considered to be the norm in our culture while everyone else is in a special interest group.

Jaka, on the other hand, can be seen as the representative of the Kevillist viewpoint, which promotes the practice of each individual advocating all of their own attributes rather than the beliefs of the society/governing structure in which they find themselves. Jaka knows what the Cinnists' laws are, yet ignores them because she doesn't see what is wrong with her actions.

The beautiful thing about the story is that it can represent the abortion issue, feminism, censorship, or any other situation where the attitudes of society and the attitudes of the individual are in conflict. There is no happy resolution because you can't give us an answer to the problem without destroying the connection to "reality" - art can only present the problem, not postulate a solution. If it does so it becomes a manifesto, not art. What you have presented is a problem: while the Cinnists are hardly the objects of sympathy, Jaka is not without faults. She knew the laws and their consequences, but never thought about them in relation to her actions - she is guilty of thoughtlessness. She was not prepared to accept the logical consequences of her actions, so she recants. Astoria can hold out because her actions are designed to have consequences while Jaka is the normal person who is suddenly in conflict with the system.

As well, Rick's reaction to the abortion of their child raises the issue of whether the wishes of the father have any bearing on an abortion - or more deeply, whether a person has any responsibility to others for their actions. Does Jaka have the right to inflict harm on Rick if his wishes conflict with hers? Even ignoring the question of the morality of aborting a fetus, issues such as these are sure to generate disagreement.

I would like to hear what other readers think about these issues as presented in your book. If anyone feels like attacking my personal position, I would like to say that I am against legislation restricting freedom more than is necessary to prevent one from causing physical harm to others, and I am opposed to censorship, but I feel that people should be aware of the responsibilities inherent in their

relationships with each other and with society. For example, I feel that Jaka took advantage of Rick in that she enjoyed the benefits of their relationship but ignored the responsibility to at least inform him of what she did. It could be argued that Rick is another example of society's expectations conflicting with her beliefs (insofar as his desire for her to perform as a traditional mother), but this is also an example of conflict between the attitudes of two individuals. The decent thing to do would have been for her to inform him of their difference in beliefs. Of course, just because I think she was wrong does not mean that I don't sympathize with her. How many of us are ready to strongly advocate all of our individual beliefs? Jaka was placed into a situation where she was made suddenly aware of how she differed from society and from Rick, a situation which she never expected or desired.

Well, that feels long enough. If this gets printed, I don't mind how it's edited as long as the questions stay in.

Toodles,

Troy Lissoway
10105-81 Avenue
Grande Prairie, Alberta
T8W 2A1

P.S. As long as favourite bands are getting plugged, how about some Canadian groups for our American friends? The Pursuit of Happiness, The Northern Pikes, Art Bergmann, The Shuffle Demons, National Velvet, The Jeff Healey Band, and Crash Vegas all come to mind. I know some of them are approaching mainstream status, but I like them anyway.

Yo Gerhard,

I called up last week and ordered the reprint volume (aka the phone book edition) of *Jaka's Story*. A pleasure to do so - one beautiful book. Monique took my order real nicely, though I did have to hold while she took another one first. She hinted I was not the only one of us buying this book. Anyway I had time to do some figuring, and here's what I figured...

S'pose it takes Monique 5 minutes to take an order for *Jaka's Story*. She takes my name, my credit card number, my address. She reads it all back and verifies it. Takes about five minutes.

Now s'pose, just s'pose she does this non-stop for eight hours. No coffee breaks, no trips to the bathroom, no mental health breaks - just taking in the orders for eight hours. How many orders can she take? 96. Let's say she works real hard and squeezes in 4 more somehow. Result: 100 orders and one

burnt-out Monique per day.

Five days a week? 500 orders a week. Nine weeks in the order period (August & September)? 4,500 orders total and Monique off to the funny farm for good.

Now here's the catch: last time I noticed on the masthead, there were 26,000 of us reading *Cerebus*. How many of us will buy the book version of *Jaka's Story*? Let's guess 1/4 of us. That makes 6,500 of us trying to order this here book.

Now, Ger ol' buddy; does all of this mean you need a couple of temporary clericals to take orders for a few weeks? Damfino. I'm out here in California. You are there in the Off-White House. You figure it out. I just provide the arithmetic.

Anyway, thanks to you and Dave for yet another masterpiece.

Yrs,

Jeff Bull
10264 Parkwood Dr #4
Cupertino, CA
USA 95014

Dear Dave, Ger & Cerebus...

Um, hi (this is the first time I have written to you, so that seems like a good place to start) I just bought the last issue of *Jaka's Story* last Friday. I was waiting for the finale, so I could write about the complete story, not the incomplete one. Let me start out by saying that, in the beginning, I was skeptical (as I think were most). Not of Cerebus (referring to the he, not the it), nor of you as an author, but of the dramatic switch in style over the previous, oh, say 113 issues. Not that this was bad (or good), I was just wary.

No longer

I am astounded.

Let me explain: I feel for Jaka. I feel for Cerebus. I felt Jaka's world fall apart. Just as I feel the power of a great painting, or the power of a great piece of music (none mentioned, as not to jump on the letter-page-bandwagon, but suffice to say that I'm a p.f. fan), I felt this. The last issue was the punch, but even beforehand, I could feel it. This was not the first time, but definitely the longest run. (The first time I felt it, and probably the hardest was the end of *Church & State*. ("you die, alone unmourned, and unloved.") I felt closer to Cerebus than I have ever felt to most of my friends. scary.) And, wow, could I feel Rick's thumb breaking. This novel is more of a human novel. It seems very introspective (all of them are, but you know what I mean). The overall theme is present, but I see it go deeper. I can only hope that for the next 164 issues,

we are treated to the same incredible vision. I want inside Cerebus' brain the way I was in Jaka's. I'm looking forward to it, moreso than ever.

What I'm trying to say is it was incredible. Not just "Jaka's Story", but all of it. Congratulations

On to a completely different subject, one that might annoy you, but I hope that it doesn't. I was extremely disappointed to find out (long ago) that the \$300 limited edition large three volume set of *Jaka's Story* was cancelled. (I might have been one of the only ones to actually order the suckers I called Monique and she didn't even know about it yet! She took my name, and then called me back and told me it was cancelled). Now, understand that I am not wealthy by any stretch of the imagination (I am a student at the University of Texas majoring in art), but it is with great pride that I could own such luxuries. I would rather put \$300 in your pocket than almost anyone's. I know it would go to good use, to an artist I deeply admire, and would promote something I feel is very worthwhile. I can understand your point of view, but also understand that there are people out here that don't feel like they are being ripped off at all. And it's money that can be kept away from some fucking bureaucracy. It's worth it to me I wish I could go back in time and order all the cool stuff that used to be in the back of the book. Original artwork, newsletters, portfolios, dolls, t-shirts, cards, posters etc., I wish I had been an intelligent 13 year old when I started reading Cerebus (back in 1983) and gotten all of it. Now I have to search it out. Which leads me to the question: do you have any idea where to get all that stuff? Do you have anything left laying around? If you do will you sell it to me? Was the "First Fifth" ever completed? When are the "I Survived Jaka's Story" t-shirts actually coming out (or am I just looking in the wrong place)? I swear I've called every comic store in Texas and they don't have it! Do you still sell original art? What about the doll of yesteryear? Any information you can provide is greatly appreciated. Another possibly annoying question: do you do conventions anymore, and if so, how about Texas. It's been a while.

Take it easy, and keep up the excellent work (that goes to everybody there)...

Until next time,

Patrick Lakey
1919 Burton #253-B
Austin, TX
USA 78741

Dear Denizens of Aardvark comment:

Has anyone noticed the latest trend in letters here?

There have been the letters where people write about what music they're listening to, the ones about masturbation, the ones where someone will just babble aimlessly, the letters seeking advice (or, at least sympathy) for the lovelorn from Uncle Dave, the letters of worship for Cassandra the Witch, the letters in which people describe drug induced experiences and observations, etc., etc. . . Mix and match as you like.

Now a new type has developed. The letter of complaint

I'm writing now to complain about the people writing letters to complain about letters they read in Aardvark Comment. I feel this is a legitimate complaint, and anyone who feels the need to complain about my letter of complaint about letters of complaint should write a letter of complaint to A.V. right away, or even write to me personally, so I can write a letter of complaint right back to them. In my response, I might even try to be compliant about my position on complaint, and letters pertaining to my position thereon, heretofore, henceforth and forthwith, but without a fourth for bridge, and I'll burn that bridge when I get it behind me. And lastly I'd like to state that any further discussion of the discrepancies in this discourse would be discourteous. Now go get your dictionary and tell me what I just said before your mother and I send you to bed with a slipped disc

You understand what I'm trying to say, don't you?

All right, then, let me try it this way: Has anyone noticed that Dave is still printing these letters with which so many people are so annoyed? Has anyone noticed that my brother has sent TONS of letters to Dave that have never been printed in A.C.? (Of course you haven't. They've never been printed.) Has anyone noticed the abundance of letters in A.C. which address the issue of freedom of expression, and the restrictions being applied to that freedom in the modern world? Has anyone noticed that freedom of expression, etc., seem to be subjects close to Dave's heart. Let's put two and two together.

Four.

Am I ever glad I passed first grade math — otherwise I could have made a real fool of myself there.

As to what I'm really trying to say: Dave can print whatever he wants, and he still prints those letters which people have complained about so vehemently. The point being that Dave is allowing people their freedom of expression

within his letter column, by printing pretty much whatever is submitted to him (except for the letters from my brother — which have probably degenerated to obscure and violent threats of death at not having been printed anyway. And who wants to read that). Not that I'm raising myself up to speak for Dave — if he wanted to speak, he'd speak for himself. But it seems to me that A.C. is one of the last outlets of free expression in the Northern Hemisphere (boy am I ever tooting it's horn — let's just toss it up there on that pedestal), and we should let people write what they want, however moronic we think they are. Hey, whoa, where did this soapbox come from, and how did I get on top of it?

But would this really be a letter to A.C. if I didn't make some rude comments?

So let me just say that Penny can straighten me out any time she feels like it . . . (and other assorted rude comments and vulgarities and probably a few clueless, sexist quips and hasn't this letter run on much too long ALREADY?)

Sincerely,

Steve Koriagin
(OK, I admit, I AM related to my brother, Jon.)
145 Canfield Ave #5
Santa Cruz, CA
95060
United States of America

Addendum: I guess Brian Hurley said all this better in his letter in issue 136, but I didn't see his letter until after I wrote this one anyway.

Dear Dave Sim -

It's a bit out of my league to write to comic book artists or their respective co-workers. But, this is my 20th year in comics, and after reminiscing all those who were part of that, I had realized that you and your Cerebus character have been a big part in my personality in comics. Back in 1979 at the Toronto Comic Con (I was only 14 at that time), you were one of the artists with Frank Miller (Pre-Daredevil days). I believe Cerebus was around #6-10 or whatever. I had never seen or heard of this not-so-common looking character. But, I said to myself, an artist is an artist. "What the Hell and get his autograph" was my attitude. Since I'm profoundly deaf and you and I didn't communicate very well, instead of talking you drew Cerebus' head along with your signature. At that moment, since I'm very "visually-connected" your hand movements were memorized on how you drew Cerebus in my brain. Ever since then, I find myself drawing

Cerebus heads whenever I doodle out of boredom or to display my artistic talents. Even now, I can just doodle it without effort, although the drawing was "Early Cerebus" and looks very different to today's rendition of Cerebus in 1990. I can do it at a spur of a moment. Right now, I'm no longer a comic book "junkie" as I've reduced my impulsive collecting habits. I no longer collect anything from Marvel & DC. I basically buy 2 or 3 books at a time - Cerebus, Eisner's Spirit, and EC reprints by Gladstone. That's all I care about. I'm quite proud that Cerebus is still here 11 years after I met you. The storylines meet my expectations in the level that I prefer - as far as concepts and sophistication I mean.

Aside from Comic Books - I'm a TV producer for the Silent Network, a National Cable TV Network for deaf audiences which is seen in 14 million homes across the U.S. and Canada - we're very visually oriented. Comics has a major role in my work because it shows breakdowns of action and dialogue which is mainly "captioned". Those theories apply somewhat to deaf television as we rely on captioning the action. I won't bore you any longer on show biz talk

I only wanted to let you know that you and Cerebus were important in my 20 year collecting history. I'm not writing to anyone else about this as they don't count.

Adios

David A. Pierce
11200 Perrin Beitel #106
San Antonio, TX
USA 78217

To know, man!

A thought - has it ever occurred to anyone that while most comics are plotted like novels or movies (i.e. lots of physical action and travelling), Cerebus is plotted more like a play (the action is mostly verbal)? There's an idea.

Anyways, I really enjoyed *Jaka's Story*. The ending was a real shocker. Does this mean that Jaka is a Kevillist or was she just a young woman frightened of her husband's reaction (and apparently with good cause too)? I thought that Rick's reaction was rather severe, but on the other hand we don't really know anything about his upbringing, his views on abortion and marriage, and how much he really wanted a son (apparently quite a lot). Also, he was probably under quite a bit of mental strain if he was treated anything like Jaka was treated. Actually, he was probably treated worse because he's from Iest (not a foreign national) and

because he's a man.

Nice of Mrs. Thatcher to spring things on them like that and then not give them a chance to talk it out. She reminds me of Nurse Ratched from *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* - cheerful and friendly as they twist the knife in your back, all for your own good of course. As loathsome as she is, you can sort of understand her actions. I mean, from her law and order, dyed in the wool Circinist point of view, here's Jaka, a woman guilty of the most heinous of crimes, killing her own child, and she's about to get off because of diplomatic immunity and she's even conned an upstanding citizen of Iest to go with her. Here's her chance to win at least a moral victory, to ensure that sin has a negative consequence, and to rescue Rick from Jaka's evil influence. Here's her chance to make Jaka pay for her crimes

By the way, was it the Guffin that led the Circinists to Pud's place?

The letter column has been quite pathetic of late. I agree with the reader who wanted a balance between funny letters and "serious" discussion letters. However, there seems to be too much of the former and not enough of the latter. While both types of letters are really just exercises in self aggrandizement, "serious" letters at least hold out the promise of insights into what's going on in the story. I'd rather understand what's going on in the story that find out that reader X likes Tones on Tails and reader Y doesn't

Your loyal (almost verging on sycophantic) fan,

Constant Tang
9 Parmalea Crescent
Nepean, Ontario
K2E 7J1

-Dave and Ger;

Jaka swallowed her pride and signed the damned confession. What the hell, right? Rather a live coward than a dead hero. One thing that struck me is that, so far at least, you've had the good taste and uncommon creativity to NOT have Cerebus come storming to the rescue. Dave, you are a hell of a writer. There are no false emotions in your work, and I often recognize feelings I've had myself. I sympathize with Jaka. I know exactly how she feels. Her persecution for something she knew was not wrong struck a chord in me

Bear with me now - I have difficulty expressing this emotion coherently:

I collect many things: comics, model planes, movies on video, books on history and flying, old west and military guns. Yes, dahling, guns. And

if anybody out there doesn't like target shooting (or dancing, Mrs. Thatcher), that sure as hell doesn't make it evil. When the governor of New Jersey threatened to ban certain firearms in our state - firearms which, legally owned, in the hands of conscientious target shooters, collectors and hunters, pose no threat whatsoever to the public - I could no longer bear being one of those quiet guys who goes about his business and bothers nobody. I called hotlines, I wrote letters, I went to the NRA rally in Trenton. Seven thousand of us went to the rally in Trenton. Two thousand cops sent their signatures with their spokesperson. What we said to the legislature was, don't take away something we bought legally (followed all the rules, filled out all the forms) and paid for with our own cash, and that we believe we're guaranteed the right to own under the Bill of Rights, and that we're not hurting a soul with, just because you mistakenly perceive that the inanimate object itself is what causes people to become murderers of children. But the damned governor ignored the cries of nine thousand reasonable people (the biggest anti-legislation rally ever in NJ) and bullshit enough senators and assembly people to just get the law passed by a couple of lousy votes. Once he got our guns away from us he must have felt safe because he started taxing things I didn't know could be taxed (cable TV and long distance calls? come on!) So because I'm not a criminal and have no intention of becoming one, I had to swallow my pride (like Jaka signing the paper) (only I feel worse) and sell my military-looking AR-15 (which I spent a thousand dollars rebuilding into a quality target rifle) for a fraction of its value. That to avoid having to turn it in to the state gestapo without benefit of due process (I didn't do anything wrong anyway!) and without compensation for the expense or for the grossest insult I've ever endured (how'd you like someone to say to you you use drugs? Oh, then you must murder cops! You own a Car? Oh, then you must be a drunk driver!)

So I know how Jaka feels. It's a frustrating, idignant, furious, incredulous feeling knowing you've done nothing wrong and you bear no ill will toward anyone yet a self-righteous and misguided government can steam-roll your civil rights into oblivion with some high-handed idea of morality and the swish of a legislative pen.

New Jersey is hell

Is anybody else out there sick to death of people butting their Self-Appointed-Savior noses into other people's business? "BAN abortion, BAN guns, BAN Two Live Crew, BAN Judas Priest, BAN violence and sex in

comics, FORCE prayer and creationism into the schools, LABEL records with naughty words, BAN free thought!"

The all-male Louisiana legislature banned abortion in their state. What the hell do these old assholes know about an unwanted pregnancy? They knock up a secretary they can fire her and walk away from it!

Just a few weeks ago some overreligious snob running for office in a small town in Alabama got two X-rated national satellite dish channels taken off the air. Jesus Christ! A few bible-thumpers in one crummy little town put two national broadcast services out of business just because they didn't like the movies. Who the hell asks them? I guess there's no First Amendment in the Bible.

Hey, folks, if you don't like something (not you, Dave, I speak collectively to the readership). FINE! Don't read it, watch, or do it, as the case might be. If your conscience tells you to spread the word, then inform others of your point of view and let them make the decision according to their own conscience. But for pity's sake don't try to get that thing you dislike made illegal! Soon they'll be arresting people for holding hands in public! Anybody for Dark Ages II?

All Prohibition did was make things worse. Dancing made Jaka happy and brought in customers (well, it would have if the old guy had lived to spread the word). Jaka may have aroused Pud's sexual demons, but the man's character was strong, and he pulled himself away from certain disaster. Just in time for the government to destroy his newly redeemed life.

Please, everybody just leave each other the hell alone.

Rantingly yours,

John E. Payne
1120 High Mountain Road
Franklin Lakes, NJ
USA 07417

Dear Dave -

You're a bastard! I'm sure you've been called that before, but I just thought I ought to say it once. I'll tell you why:

You broke up the most realistic couple in all comicdom, which I guess is realistic in its own right, but the way you went about it! You took the life of probably the best female character in any comic book and shattered it. You took Rick, who was easily the nicest character ever created (in *Cerebus*), threw him against his nature and turned him into someone else in 4 pages, and worst, you obviously conceived this turn of events from the beginning, so it was completely premeditated. You

hooked us and pulled us along, only to put a nail in our hearts with this misanthropic "conclusion". Another thing, is that any way to end *Jaka's Story*? You're a bad person, Sim

However, I ought to add that, being the masochist that I am, I loved every frame *Cerebus* is the only comic I buy, since I can't find Reid Fleming anymore, and with good reason. It's the best thing out there. Well enough ego stroking for you, you don't deserve it after this. Well, I just want you to know one last thing, *Jaka's Story* intrigued and infuriated me as only great art can. The last time I remember feeling like this was when I saw *Persona*. Not that you're anything like Bergman, it's just a description of how I felt.

Last, but not least, a few random notes: Maze, who do you think you're fooling? I read "The Violent Bear It Away". I like your letters, though.

Anybody ever heard of Snakefinger?

If we never see Rick again, I'll never forgive you, Dave.

That's all -

Patrick Brown
33 Washington Sq. West #812
New York, NY
USA 10011

P.S. (I guess that's not all) Oh never mind. My train of thought was derailed. That was all

Dave
(and anybody else who's out there) ...

This afternoon, while I was riding home from the middle of nowhere with my mum, I was in a daze staring out the window at the sky pondering what Pink Floyd's *The Wall* really was when my view was obstructed by a pair of golden breasts hanging out of a jacket. Now fully awake I found out that we had stopped to fill up the car at a gas station. My mother asked me to pump the gas and had waddled off to the women's room. I looked around the gas station and the only other person that I could see was this greasy man on his back rolling underneath a car on a skateboard. Suddenly a hand touched my hand and stroked my arm to my chest. I turned around, but a single finger over my lips told me not to say a word. She slowly popped open each button of her blouse. Her tongue was wetting her lips as she gazed downward. Her hands gracefully pulled apart the last few buttons and then slid up to her breasts. She reached out for my hands and positioned my thumbs on her hardening nipples. She looked at me with big, luminous green eyes and then pushed the front seat forward and pulled me into the back seat with her. She arched her head back and tossed

her hair as my lips and tongue worked along her chest. The bulge in my shorts attracted her attention and I heard her purr as she reached into my shorts. With my button undone and my zipper following I brought my face up to hers and gave her a long tender kiss. Returning in kind, she began exploring my mouth with her tongue that was soon halfway down my throat. As our hands moved in unison down each others shorts she suddenly stopped and giggled. Getting on her back she pulled her tight jeans off and put them on the floor. She wrapped her legs around me and helped me take my shorts off. My hands stroked her thighs beginning at her knees and slowly making their way up. She then grabbed me - wait a second. All that was a typo, what I meant to say was that my mum pointed to one of the many clouds and said, "Look a cumulus nimbus!" as we were driving around and I looked at it for a few seconds and then told her I thought it looked like Margaret Thatcher with a woodpecker on her head. Having found something to do for a while, I spent the next 15 minutes looking at the clouds (to vintage psychadelia and blues courtesy of the Yardbirds). About three or four minutes into it I spotted something peculiar. There was Most Holy with sword in hand. Getting a blow job from a poodle. Avoiding the swinging fists of Fred 'n' Ethel. Being watched by Mickey Mouse. With an Uzi. And Batman. With his arms being chewed off by Snoopy. I was on a roll. That is, until the daily four o'clock showers arrived, putting something of a damper on it.

Chip Osborne
19622 Creekround Avenue
Baton Rouge, LA
USA 70817

P.S. Somehow I'm sure all the other letters are going to seem kind of dull after this one

P.P.S. Almost forgot: In early 1972 Jimmy Page was approached by underground film director Kenneth Anger to compose a soundtrack for his latest project *Lucifer Rising*. Work was begun, and would continue at the proverbial snail's pace for the next four years. The result was a spine-tingling morbid and chilling composition of mystical drones and chanting. With his brain addled by heavy heroin use, however, only twenty-eight minutes of usable music had been completed and Jimmy Page was in no shape to continue. The project was dumped, but supposedly the music survives. Anyone?

Dave -

Thanks for issue #136. It really picked up my day man, no shit. Life can really fucking suck sometimes, and it's great to have books like *Jaka's Story* around to quell those suicidal tendencies (NOT the band, the ITCH!)

I was glad when Rick got his thumb broken. He's a geek. Scrawny pencilneck assholes like him should never get to hit Jaka, no sir. I hope Cerebus kills him

I met this girl Dave. I'm going crazy over her, I'm losing it, she's fucking PERFECT! ARRRRGH! I mean, this is not your typical Gasworks or Coronet babe, the ones us Cliche Heavy Metal Vocalists That Read Comics usually want, this is a seriously SMOKING CHICK! Nuvana you say? Happiness, eternal bliss, euphoria beyond hot morning coffee and a split of Black listening to Scorpions in Trance? YES!!!

But oh no, no no no, we can't have Ger the Bear this fucking content say the Gods. Nope. She's moving to Australia Dave. AUSTRALIA!!!! Not fucking Hamilton, NOT fucking Kitchener, NOT fucking Brampton! A U S T R A L I A ! ! ! ! ARRRRRRRRGH!!!!

I feel much better now. But let's have issue #137 soon, alright? I think I need it

Sincerely,

Ger the Bear
1471 Blaine Field Rd
Mississauga, Ontario
L4Y - or something like that

P.S. Sorry 'bout the fudge comment there, bro. I hear you're trying to quit Man, you got balls

Dave,

We're doomed

You see, people are writing letters commenting on the state of the letter column. I have now written a letter commenting on the letters that comment of the state of the letter column. If this letter appears in the letter column, then someone might write a letter commenting on my letter of comment on the letters that comment on the state of the letter column, and so on, and so on, and so on. Dave, I'm worried. This could keep on spiraling and spiraling until all of the comments collapse upon themselves, creating a black hole that would engulf the solar system. So I'd like everyone to be careful. Life in this solar system isn't supposed to end that way, nobody gets to push a button...

To add upon what John Russel said: Doesn't the US Postal Service

knowingly desecrate the flag by cancelling those stamps with American flags on them? It's an image of the flag and the Post Office is stamping ink across it. Georgie Bush is gonna lynch the Post Office!

I showed a friend of mine Christian Walters' pubic hair theory, and he said that pubic hair was nature's dental floss. I told him that his comment was disgusting and only slightly amusing

Ha ha. I just read the Marx Brothers entry in my film encyclopedia. Astoria! Clever, Dave, naming Lord Julius' ex-wife after the town on Long Island where *The Cocanuts* was filmed. Now that's obscure!

The two page spread at the end of *Jaka's Story* was something else. I couldn't see Cerebus' expression, but I could imagine it (surprise mixed with confusion, shock, and despair, 'yes indeedy' (Hi Cassandra)).

Lord Julius returns?? I'll take that anyway. Tell you what Dave, you take Lord Julius and I'll take a hot butterscotch sundae on rye bread, and Gerhard... Gerhard can sell Fuller Brushes.

Swordfish,

Maynard Xenolith
P.O. Box 2391
Montgomery, AL
USA 36102 2391

P.S. Yeah, I'm the same one who wrote you the "my son the vegetable" letter a few months back. I changed my name because Maynard sounds more hip and happening and gear fab than Mark.

P.P.S. When are we going to see Estacion's version of Harpo?

P.P.P.S. Now that *Jaka's Story* is over, do we get to find out what happened to everyone else after the Black Tower broke off and accelerated? Or are you going to keep us in the dark?

Dear Dave Sim,

Oscar, voyeur, tries to draft a description of Jaka dancing, to define the activity. The descriptions he comes up with are self-expression, self-commodification, exercise of craft, and capital-A Art or transcendence (of political reality, as usual). Oscar's final composite is never made available to us simultaneously with Jaka's expression of fury at the violation of her privacy, in a rape that reverses the direction of Pud's intended thrust, the door is smashed in by the Cirinists, grotesque mothers wielding phallic weapons (grotesque because they are females in power, I suppose).

Central to "Jaka's Story", I think, are issues of pornography; and, as much as I love *Cerebus*, I don't really like how

you're handling them. The Cirinists caricature certain feminist theories; essentialism and a stand against mothers, an attitude which I resist and resent, and forbid Jaka to dance because her manipulation of men's arousal through dance disrupts the social order. We're not any more sure than Oscar why Jaka does dance, what she thinks she's doing, although she does accept Mrs. Thatcher's label of "civil disobedience", Jaka has not yet freely named her motivation. What we do know is that dancing provides Jaka's sustenance, and that she dresses in revealing eastern-looking outfits to do it. (The east certainly occupies the same place in western hierarchies of culture as women do in sexual hierarchies. The easternness of Jaka's clothes mystifies her already mysterious female sexuality, reinforces her subordination and availability to exploitation). It seems to me that dancing is the chief way Jaka has of feeling powerful (over men's attention, desire?), although it may actually make her more vulnerable. Pud's arousal, for example, was potentially dangerous to her

So what's the deal? I'm not reducing Jaka's dancing to a desire for power; it's an art, an enactment of ideas and feelings, and any art must have a complex of needs generating it in order to be very interesting. And, it is implied, Jaka's art is interesting. However, how can it be fulfilling to Jaka or to any other artist to be performing for passively aroused male voyeurs in a bar, in a comic book? What needs can that possibly satisfy? And why the hell can't her needs, performance, desires be described?

I haven't taken a stand about pornography. On one hand, the way women are depicted everywhere from TV commercials to pornographic films to comic books has fucked most of us over, male and female, for life. I'm a feminist, pursuing a career I believe in and making art, both with some success, but my sense of identity has always been, probably always will be, dependent on the judgement (mostly male) of authority figures in a profound way that a lot of men will just never experience. I commodify myself endlessly, perpetually insecure about my attractiveness, always in fear of being undersold or outdated. Pornography violates my civil rights; it's slander, discrimination. On the other hand, I don't know if it can be defined well enough to responsibly legislate without violating freedom of expression, regulation of pornography could be a tool for some people to regulate alternative sexualities. I don't know where to plant my feet for a better world. I do feel, with my now-whole-but-fractured-heart, that there is

very little empowering or freedom going on if the Cinnists are overthrown and Jaka gains the legal right to dress up like a harem-woman and express herself in an isolated bar to a parasitic child-man, a misogynist writer, a would-be rapist, and a decrepit addict.

I wrote this about a month ago, and decided not to mail it until I had seen the last issue of *Jaka's Story*. Once again, you are infuriatingly hard to pin down on important issues; once again you raise and refuse to responsibly deal with concerns involving women's powers over their bodies. The evil mother separates the victimized protagonist from the child-man by accusing Jaka of abortion. Again for reasons we don't know, Jaka has exercised a basic right, possibly a dangerous undertaking in itself, and is persecuted for it. Of course Rick is devastated and of course we sympathize, to him it is a terrible loss, and a betrayal of confidence (never forgetting that this man wasn't in a position to feed a baby or a recovering mother, and that the same man once said, "If because Jaka fell in love with me . . . if because of that . . . she couldn't dance anymore, I'd hate her . . . I'd hate myself. I'd feel as if our love had destroyed something more important than either of us").

I can imagine, and you have hinted at, good reasons why Jaka might have an abortion without telling Rick. Yet, we are left with a punished and desolate Jaka who never gets her own say. I think the complexity of your work is one of the best things about it, but I'm unhappy with it here. A woman's right to choose is under furious debate right now. You are so wonderfully vocal and active about an artist's rights over his or her own work; Jaka is a dancer who makes art with her very body; why are you so ambivalent about her rights?

Still reading.

Lesley Wheeler

1301 Drier Place, Highland Park, NJ
USA 08904

Dear Dave,

First of all I'd like to -

NO! WAIT! I WON'T DO THAT!

Something to do with gravity, Smuckers strawberry jam, a STARS WARS lunch box (complete with thermos), two women, and some rubber sheets. It's a long story but not too uninteresting.

****DATELINE**** (insert news-line type of audios and silly cut outs or melodramatic pictures behind the anchor persons head)

****DALLAS FANTASY FAIR****

****SECOND ANNUAL GARY**

GROTH AWARDS** OOPS!

I mean the Harvey Awards. No offense to Mr Kurtzman was intended

I was freezing my ass off at one of those panels on "new writing", or something like that, the whole incident is fading like a good pair of 501's. Except for one moment which, unfortunately, was one of the highpoints of this con. This particular panel is progressing better than most. Intelligent questions and answers. Now if I remember correctly, the question that was being tossed around WAS something like "Who you create for" or something like that. It was a fairly personal question. So then "Mr. Dough" (I won't use his last name because I want to piss those Fantagraphics blood-hounds off), was teetering on a soap box with his apparently over-inflated head ("Mr. Dough" was nominated for a Harvey Award).

So during "Mr. Dough's" conceited and contradictory soliloquy one of his comments about art and money rubbed me wrong. So like any artist, I responded back to him and told him my thoughts on the matter. "Mr. Dough" looked at me with a cocky grin and said to me (keep in mind "Mr. Dough" has a voice that sounds like an excessively drooling "Klondike Cat" (an old Hanna-Barbara character)). "Well obviously you're not an artist"

Now whether he said that to be cute, or was really serious is not important to me. So while he's getting a few laughs from the audience, I give him the bird and respond. "Fuck-you pal. Fuck you". And that was the end of it, well not exactly. "Mr. Dough" hid behind the words of another panel member and slammed me, but I didn't bother to try to deal with his enormous ego any further. I was proud of what I said, damn proud. Told all of my friends, felt like a hero. But the convention is over, has been for two weeks, and I'd like to use your forum Dave, to apologize to every one

First, to the other panel members; Chester Brown, Neil Gaiman, Mark Wheatley, David Boswell, and Bob Burden. I hope my outburst didn't insult or offend any of you. To you "Mr. Dough" your remarks to me were very unprofessional and downright rude. Not saying that my response wasn't also unnecessary. I didn't need to rely on a foul mouth to soothe my pride. So I'm apologizing to you as well "Mr. Dough", although I don't entirely regret what I said

So remember this "Mr. Dough", nothing lasts forever. Especially in the comic industry.

Back to you Dave. Thank you for letting me have my say in your book

(that is if you print it).

Cerebus is still great and it's good to see the earth-pig again, sans the dress. Do you think he'll make the PEOPLE magazine's Best/Worst dressed of 1990?

Hang'em high.

The Atomic Punk

319 B Fulton

Denton, TX

USA 76210

Dave!

Rereading old Cerebus letter columns today; what fun!

Tell Mike Robbins that, yes, I have heard Bongwater's *Double Bummer* album, and I bought *Too Much Sleep* today, which I found to be equal in it's stunning breadth. But I'm not going to mail him a dollar. In fact, I just stumbled upon a *Rolling Stone* article talking about Bongwater's albums, and, in fact, this was the same issue of the dreaded *Rolling Stone* that featured *Cerebus* as one of the "Hot Comics". Synchronicity is weird and usually frightening

I just had a horrible thought "And that's your heart's fondest desire?"

"That's it . . . a son."

When I first read Rick was alive, I was naturally relieved (I must admit I had given him up for dead). But now I realize - just because Rick isn't dead doesn't mean that he's been sitting around in a lounge chair reading *The Wall Street Journal* and sipping lemonade with Cliri - why, he probably went through the same hell Jaka went through - probably worse. Ya know what I think?

I think the poor guy's been castrated
SHOCK ENDING!

Wow you wouldn't do that, would you? Okay, maybe you would. I'm mourning already

Ya know, I read my first (published) letter and was halfway through it before I realized that I had written it. I think that means that I've gotten better. Incidentally, I was mistaken when I made the high school claim that I loved this girl. I needed her, but I didn't love her. Everyone makes mistakes. I reread the earlier *Jaka's Story* installments and I associated with Rick's "head-in-the-clouds, I-don't-wanna-work" attitude much more than Cerebus' grumpy "hey, you've-got-to-hide-your-love-away" attitude. Curioser and curioser.

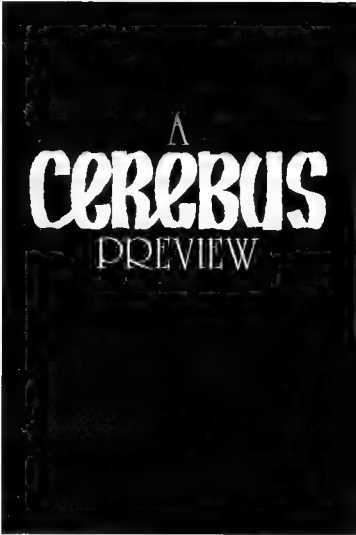
Yours in awe and anticipation,

Jeremy "cowtown" Bushnell

1120 Bristol Road

Warminster, PA

USA 18974



A CEREBUS PREVIEW

Scott McCloud and Steve Bissette are two of the slowest artists in the business. So it was with a great deal of amusement that I heard that Scott had challenged Steve (and himself) to produce a 24 page comic book story in 24 hours. Every time I talked to Steve the day was drawing closer and he would mention it again. I tried to keep from laughing out loud. Maybe - *maybe!* - he could get the panel borders done in twenty-four hours. On half of it.

Imagine my surprise when the package arrived of twenty-four photocopies stapled together. Imagine my even greater surprise when I found it to contain one of the best pieces of Steve Bissette story-telling I have ever seen anywhere.

Imagine Steve's surprise when I suggested he do one a month and become the only other self-publisher of a monthly comic book in North America.

Imagine *your* surprise when you see *Spider-baby* #1 in your comic book store this December. Well, you *would've* been surprised if I hadn't told you.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the first eight pages of "A Life in Black and White." The background noise is Dave Sim eating a little crow.

If Marty had had
any idea what
was in store for
him, he'd have
stayed put...



But nature, karma, and gravity had already gathered their forces...

...and began their
push!



Okay, another
one is coming
on...



PUSH!



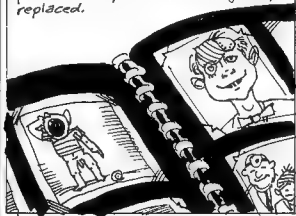
Things got worse.



The doctor dropped Marty on his fragile little skull.



Of course, as Marty grew, the plate and eye had to be regularly replaced.



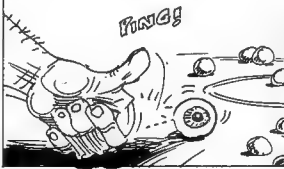
Things got worse, Marty's first word was 'lawyer'.



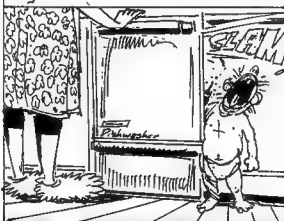
He was fitted for a glass eye and a metal plate was surgically implanted.



Surgery became a way of life, but Marty had the niftiest marbles in the neighborhood (that wasn't of any importance yet).

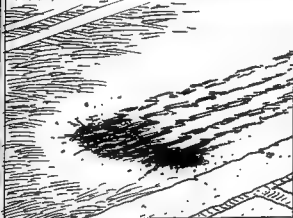


A freak accident cost Marty his right arm.





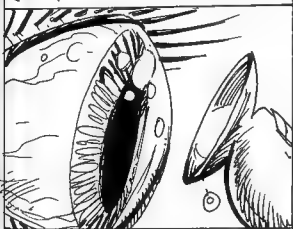
A school bus accident crushed his left foot.



Marty caught a fly ball in the face, and it was decided he needed glasses.



(Marty later choose a contact lense.)



In high school, Marty began to wear a hairpiece to cover his plate.



A suspicious fall down the school steps yielded a metal pin in his arm.

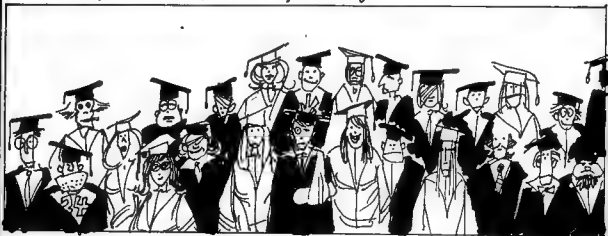


Poor dental care took an early toll.

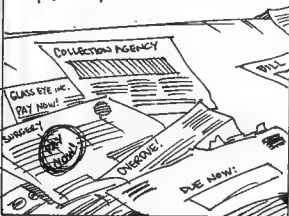




Marty survived high school, graduating with honors.



Despite scholarships, college was simply not possible for him.



Hell, even masturbation was damn near impossible for Marty.



His parents turned to alcohol and prescription medication for succor.



Marty let his hair grow to cover his plate. He wore it in a 'Veronica Lake' affectation to cover his glass eye.

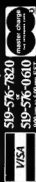


One evening,
Marty's folks
made a death
pact.



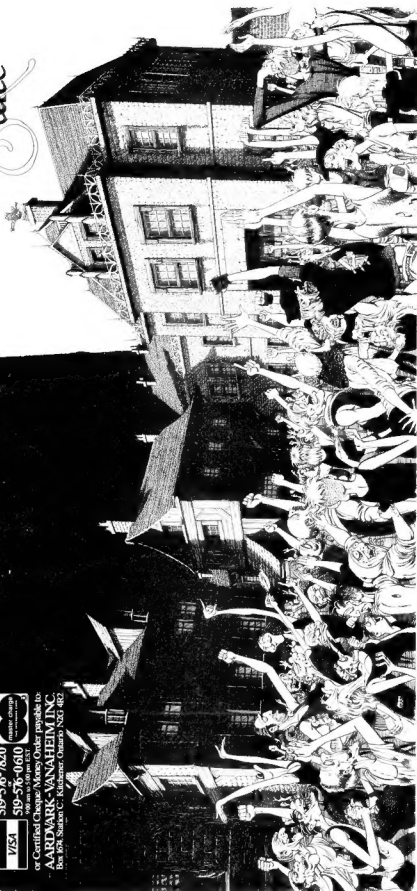
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GERHARD, Killarney Park, summer 1990